

VOTE - Voter Outreach Through Education Washington Secretary of State

WASHINGTON STATE CURRICULUM GRADES 8-12

TEACHER: LESSON 5

THEME: AN INFORMED AND TIMELY VOTE

The call to citizens to fully utilize their voting rights and responsibilities is clearly evident in the following:

"The only title in our democracy superior to that of President is the title of citizen."
(Justice Louis Brandeis, 1937)

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."
(Wendell Phillips (1811-1884), American abolitionist)

The struggles of our predecessors have both bestowed and preserved the right of every qualified citizen to register and to vote. Such an endowment of democracy summons us to reply with efforts to be informed about the election process, the candidates, and the issues that await us on election day.

We, as citizens, are warned in the following quote by Samuel Langdon in 1788: "On the people, therefore, of these United States, it depends whether wise men, or fools, good or bad men, shall govern..."

This lesson attempts to heed Langdon's warning. Its goals are to:

1. Acquaint students with some information and resources available to voters.
2. Give them some tips on sorting objective sources from more biased ones.
3. Introduce them to the significant dates and deadlines of the voting/election process.

ACTIVITY: A WEB OF INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

This activity is designed to be completed at home or school as a self-guided activity. It can also be done as a collaborative exercise by teams, preferably pairs. It is broken into parts, following a pattern of:

1. Presenting a topic,
2. Directing them to a web site, and
3. Giving the students questions to answer, having them discover available resources, and helping them to learn the information.

Copy and distribute the Student Lesson AN INFORMED AND TIMELY VOTE. Note: The answers are on the bottom of the student lesson so each student or team can compare results with the answers when finished. Another option is to remove the answers from the lesson before you copy it, and then present the answers all at once when you choose. Students will need access to the Internet at www.vote.wa.gov.

The questions and answers are listed below for you.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the first office on the list?
2. Office # 3002 shows you that the office next in line to the Governor is the ____ Governor.
3. How many State Appeals Court Judges will be on the ballot that year?
4. Will any State Senators (not Federal) be on the ballot?
5. Noting their political party listing, what do the judicial candidates have in common with the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction?
6. The term of office is the length of time an elected official holds office before having to be re-elected. How many years is the length of the term for a State Supreme Court Judge?
7. What are the names of our state's two U.S. Senators?
8. Do their terms end in the same year?
9. How many years is the term of service in the U.S. House of Representatives? (Hint: Look in far right column.)
10. What is the name of the U.S. Representative in your district?
11. In your own words, what does "Incumbent" mean?
12. On an Initiative of your choice, give its number, sponsor and (in one sentence) summarize what it is intended to do.
13. This state's House of Representatives and Senate in Olympia are different than the federal U.S. House of Representatives and Senate in Washington D.C. In Olympia, there are two State House members and one State Senator for each district. How many legislative districts do they represent?
14. (A) By clicking on "Ballot Measures," then on "Initiative 713," what do you find was the percentage of Washington voters who voted "Yes" for the animal trapping measure?
(B) By clicking on "Federal Officers," then on "President/Vice President," what do you find was the number of political parties that received votes for President/Vice President in our state?
15. What is the number of statewide elected offices in Washington State?
16. What are the three options presented to you below each ballot measure's official ballot title?
17. The "Explanatory Statement" explains the law as it ____ and the ____ if the measure becomes law.
18. What disclaimer comment at the top of the "Arguments For or Against" page reminds you that the objectivity of the arguments

- is not guaranteed?
19. At the bottom of each ballot measure, what information is provided that reminds you that the statements FOR and AGAINST are not objective information sources?
 20. In September of an election year, what important election event takes place? (Hint: All elections in Washington State are held on Tuesdays.)
 21. In early and late October of an election year, what two deadlines for the General election occur that are important to would-be voters? (A) _____ (B) _____
 22. At the end of August, County Auditors must have _____ available for the September Primary. Following this pattern, in what month must County Auditors have the same item ready for the General Election? _____
 23. In what part of the month of November is the General election always held? (Early, middle, or late) _____
 24. Using the calendar, what is the approximate amount of time that the state law allows the Office of the Secretary of State to certify the final state General election results?

ANSWERS:

1. President, Vice President
2. Lieutenant
3. Five
4. Yes, 25
5. NP, "Non Partisan" which means they are not affiliated with a particular political party
6. Six years
7. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell
8. No, so we always have one U.S. Senator with experience
9. Two years
10. Answer depends on the district the student lives in
11. Incumbent means the one currently holding office
12. Depends on the Initiative chosen
13. 49 districts
14. (A) 71.73% voted "Yes"
(B) 10 political parties received votes for President/Vice President
15. 9 statewide elected offices
16. Explanatory Statement; Arguments For and Against; Complete Text
17. Now exists; effect
18. The following arguments were prepared by committees appointed in accordance with state law. The Office of the Secretary of State is not authorized to edit arguments, nor is it responsible for their content.
19. The statements prepared by committees and supporters of the arguments
20. State Primary
21. (A) Deadlines for voter registration by mail
(B) Voter registration in person
22. Absentee ballots; October
23. Early
24. 30 days